

"Frankenstein: Mary Shelley's Dream"

From **Frankenstein: Or a Modern Prometheus**, by Mary Shelley

Adapted For Object Theater by The Bakken Library and Museum

Scene One — Victor Frankenstein's Laboratory, Midnight

Sounds of a thunderstorm. Flashes of lightning from a Gothic window intermittently illuminate Frankenstein's laboratory.

VICTOR

I worked hard for nearly two years, depriving myself of rest and health, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body.

The engines of creation bang and crackle. Electrical charges zing across the lab from different directions. After a final series of lights and static, the laboratory settles into darkness and silence. A soft heartbeat begins and grows louder . . .

VICTOR

But now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart.

Scene Two — Laboratory, Dawn

The morning light gradually reveals the wizardry of late 18th-century science - coils, jars, various instruments, books, anatomy posters, chemical charts, etc.

VICTOR

My name is Victor Frankenstein. I was born in Geneva, Switzerland. When I was seventeen, I was sent to the great University of Ingolstadt. I was an ardent student, my restless mind hungry for knowledge and new ideas. It was the mystery of life itself that eventually became my sole occupation. How is lifeless matter miraculously transformed into a living being? If I could solve this mystery, what glory would attend this discovery!

I entered into the search for the elixir of life. Winter, spring, and summer passed in a haze of labor and fatigue. And then a sudden light broke in upon me - a light so brilliant, yet so simple. When I found so astonishing a power placed within my hands, I hesitated. Should I attempt the creation of a being like myself? But so excited was I, that any doubts were easily overcome.

So it was that on a dreary night in November, I beheld the accomplishment of my toils. I collected the instruments of life around me, that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet.

Night falls, the storm resumes, and with it the flashes of lighting and sounds of Frankenstein's apparatus.

By the glimmer of the nearly burnt out candle, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open and his limbs begin to stir. Now animated with life his appearance was hideous, a grotesque parody of human beauty. I fled in terror from the creature I created and left him to find his own way in the world.

Sounds of the instruments of creation. Hideous, glowing eyes appear and the Creature's limbs stir.

Scene Three — Glacier at Chamonix, Midday

Laboratory fades out slowly. An alpine landscape gradually materializes.

VICTOR

That night I slept the sleep of the wicked, my dreams animated with scenes so terrible that I awoke in a teeth-chattering sweat. The next days were no better. Eventually, I sank into a nervous fever. Months later, when my convalescence was almost complete, I sought renewal on a walking trip through the nearby mountain valleys.

Crunching through the snow

It was nearly noon when I reached the top of the Montanvert glacier. As I looked out over the sea of ice, I suddenly beheld the figure of a man advancing towards me at superhuman speed. A faintness seized me! It was the wretch whom I had created!

CREATURE

Approaching Victor

Be calm! I am thy creature, and I will be mild and docile if you will also perform thy part. Everywhere I see bliss, from which I am excluded. I entreat you to hear my tale.

Scene Four — Mountain Hut Later That Evening

The glacier landscape fades. Victor and the Creature sit around a crackling fire in a dimly lit hut.

CREATURE

I have only the dimmest memory of my first hours of life. I felt only light, hunger, thirst, and darkness. I had no notion of my ugliness until I first met people. They shrank from me in fear and disgust or drove me away with sticks.

So I stayed out of sight and watched them from a distance - hoping that by learning their ways I might one day make friends. I found that people communicated their feelings to one another by sounds. So I applied myself to acquiring the art of language. I learned to speak.

At last I was ready to approach a kindly farm family whose goodness I had observed. I imagined that they would be disgusted, until by my gentle demeanor, I should first win their favor, and afterwards their love. But I was mistaken. I was beaten and run off. Was man so virtuous and magnificent, yet so vicious and base? And what was I? A fatherless, motherless, unhappy wretch!

And then I found papers from your laboratory in my pocket. Unfeeling, heartless creator! Why did you form a monster so hideous that even you turned from me in disgust? Why did you cast me out an object for the scorn and horror of mankind?

So I come to you now.

VICTOR

Monster! Fiend! I will not pity you. You have killed and done great evil in your senseless revenge against me.

CREATURE

I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous. You must create a female for me, as hideous as myself, with whom I can live. We shall be monsters, cut off from the world, but attached to each other. If you consent, neither you nor any other human being shall ever see us again.

VICTOR

Horried

Create another like yourself to desolate the world? I refuse it!

CREATURE

What I ask of you, my creator, is reasonable and moderate. If any being felt emotions of love towards me, I should return them a hundred-fold.

VICTOR

I think of my beloved Elizabeth, my future wife. Without her I would have no hope of happiness. I have no right to withhold this from you. I consent to your demand.

Scene Five — Laboratory, Evening

VICTOR

During my first experiment, a kind of enthusiastic frenzy had blinded me to the horror of my employment. But now I went to it in cold blood, and my heart often sickened at the work of my hands. He has sworn to quit the neighborhood of man, where he had killed and terrified innocent souls --- but she, his mate, had not. Now, for the first time, the wickedness of my promise burst upon me; had I the right to inflict this curse upon everlasting generations? I decided to destroy her.

The laboratory darkens as we hear the sounds of Frankenstein breaking his equipment. A howling comes from outside. The Creature appears at the window.

CREATURE

Why shall each man find a wife for his bosom, and each beast have his mate, and I be alone? Remember, I shall be with you on your wedding night!

Scene Six — Ice Bound Ship, Evening

A desolate wasteland of ice appears through the cabin window of a ship.

VICTOR

The fiend was true to his word. He killed my lovely Elizabeth and fled. Every hope for my future happiness gone, I vowed to destroy my monstrous creation. I followed his trail for many months across the Northern wilds of Russia and then onto the endless, mountainous ices of the oceans. I was adrift on an ice floe when I saw an ice-bound ship. Now I lie dying in its cabin thinking of all that has happened.

A candle illuminates Victor's form lying in a berth.

VICTOR

Dying

Farewell! Seek happiness in tranquility, avoid ambition, even the innocent one of distinguishing yourself in science. Why do I say this? I myself have been blasted in these hopes, yet another may succeed.

Victor breathes his last breath as the Arctic scene fades. A moment of darkness.

Scene Seven — Ice Bound Ship, Evening

CREATURE

Bursting into the room

When I discovered that you hoped for a happiness from which I was forever barred, then envy and bitterness filled me with an insatiable thirst for vengeance.

But am I to be thought the only criminal, when all human kind sinned against me? You sought my extinction, that I may not cause greater wretchedness. Now, I shall consume to ashes this miserable frame, that its remains afford no light to any curious wretch, who would create another such as I have been.

Darkness. A moment of silence.

© The Bakken, 2000

Use of this entire script for educational purposes is ok without prior consent, please give The Bakken credit and show our copyright "© The Bakken 2000".